

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Moncur	Children's, Schools, Families and Leisure	November 2012 - January 2013

PARKS AND GREENSPACES

'Crosby Lights' and 'Nancy and the Bonfire'

Two high-profile park events took place recently during the Mischief Night / Bonfire Night period, in order to try and reduce the anti-social behaviour which often occurs in parks and wider neighbourhoods during this period. The events were co-ordinated by the Community Parks Officers.

On 30th October, 'Crosby Lights' in Coronation Park provided floodlit kayak taster sessions, zorbing, tennis and football coaching and many other activities. On 5th November, 'Nancy and the Bonfire' in Derby Park, saw the official opening of the refurbished bandstand, with a series of drama and dance performances from local groups.

Both events were the result of the Parks and Greenspace Service working in close collaboration with a wide range of partners, including Merseyside Police, Fire Service, Positive Futures, Youth Service, sports organisations, local schools, Friends of groups, Writing on the Wall, Sefton Arts, Hugh Baird College, private businesses and many others. Because of all the contributions which all these partners brought to the projects, the events cost the Council very little money, but reached an audience of more than 2,000 people.

The police have reported that the events helped to significantly reduce anti-social behaviour in both areas over the period, and the events also helped to create better community ownership and respect for the parks.

The police have expressed a strong wish to expand this type of activity in the future should funding become available.

Due to the success of the 'Nancy' event, other funding has also been provided for a carol concert in the bandstand at Derby Park, and discussions are also taking place with local Housing Associations regarding funding for future activities.

'Paddle in the Park' Presentations

'Paddle in the Park' was an initiative that ran through the summer holiday period at the boating lake in Coronation Park, Crosby. Co-ordinated by the Community Parks Officer for Crosby, kayaking lessons were made available for free to young people every Friday evening. The initiative was a joint one between Parks and Greenspace Service, Merseyside Police, Crosby Lakeside Adventure Centre and Positive Futures. The project provided positive activities during the summer holiday period, to help reduce anti-social behaviour in the area. Ten of the participants were then able to follow up their new skills by progressing to a Canoe England Paddle Power course at Crosby Lakeside Adventure

Centre. These young people were then presented with certificates of achievement by the Mayor of Sefton in November.

The funding for the project came from Merseyside Police, to help provide diversionary activities.

Changes to Parks Management

Following the re-engineering of the Parks and Greenspace Service, and the high level of savings that need to continue over the next two financial years, work has progressed on redesigning the parks to incorporate a different style of management. This is necessary to make significant financial savings, whilst trying to continue to provide parks which are safe and well-used, and appreciated by the local communities.

The changes will introduce a more natural style of management wherever appropriate, with longer grass, wild flowers, and reductions in costly items such as annual bedding, rose beds, hedges etc. There will also be an increase in pro-active engagement with volunteers, local communities and other partners, to try and reduce the impact of the savings. Information will be made available to park users about the proposed changes to their parks, which will continue over the next two years.

Parkforce

As part of the re-engineering of the Parks Service, existing front-line staff are being incorporated into a new team called 'Parkforce'. This approach is to improve the day-to-day interaction with the public, to help improve the feeling of safety in the parks and reduce vandalism. The team will provide an increased, visible presence in the parks, and encourage further vital support from volunteers. The roles of the former 'Park Rangers' is being changed to emphasise the councils priorities of community engagement and park safety, and they are now called 'Community Parks Officers', within the Parkforce Team.

North West in Bloom

'In Bloom' has gone from strength to strength over recent years . The Campaign is aimed at encouraging local communities to be involved in, and take greater responsibility for their environment, including parks, town centres, highways and private spaces.

The campaign is intrinsically linked with the community work that has been established within local parks and greenspaces.

Previously, In Bloom was seen as a Campaign led by the local authority, but nowadays The Parks and Greenspace Service co-ordinates the NWIB competition in Sefton and encourages ownership of the campaign by the community.

This year, the three Town entries all did extremely well, matching last year's results of silver-gilt (Southport and Crosby & Waterloo) or beating it with a Gold (Maghull). The Parks Service also supported a number of 'Neighbourhood' awards across the Borough, including community groups involved with parks, village centres, stations and individual streets.

It is evident that the local community are very passionate about widening the scope of the In Bloom success. PGS will continue to work with the community as a way of developing community resilience and responsibility and support for the changes being made to parks management.

ROSPA Play Operators Award

Landscape Services have recently been notified by ROSPA- (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) that we have won their prestigious Play Operators Award. The safety and accident prevention body have awarded us its ' gold category' for the contribution we make to preventing accidents and taking care of playgrounds in Sefton.

RoSPA have informed the Council that no other local authority in the North West has been awarded its gold standard in the award. This is the third time that the awarding body have issued the award to the Council and on each occasion we have received a higher standard. As part of the judging process every playground in Sefton was visited by inspectors.